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Viewing cable 09CARACAS967, THREATS AGAINST INDEPENDENT MEDIA CONTINUE IN JULY

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#09CARACAS967**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09CARACAS967	2009-07-27 20:14	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Caracas

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.elnuevoherald.com/2011/08/08/998979/documentan-ofensiva-de-chavez.html>

VZCZCXRO7580
PP RUEHAG RUEHROV RUEHSL RUEHSR
DE RUEHCV #0967/01 2082014
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 272014Z JUL 09
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3456
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHWL/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 000967

SIPDIS

HQSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
DEPARTMENT PASS TO AID/OTI (RPORTER)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/27/2024
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: THREATS AGAINST INDEPENDENT MEDIA CONTINUE IN JULY

REF: A. CARACAS 663
 1B. CARACAS 887 AND PREVIOUS

CARACAS 00000967 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR DARNALL STEUART,
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: As of the second half of July, pressure continues against independent media in Venezuela. New charges were brought against opposition-oriented Globovision station owner, Guillermo Zuloaga, for "conspiracy to commit a crime." A judge barred Zuloaga from leaving the country but then claimed she was pressured by a superior into issuing the order after her initial order was revoked. Those supporting the station claim that this is simply more proof that the GBRV is using prosecutors and judges to pressure and intimidate the opposition. As the Government continues to threaten draconian restrictions on radio networks, pro-Government stations seemingly are able to bypass the "new rules" designed to silence more critical stations. Two New York Times reporters learned first hand how pro-Chavez security forces deal with reporters that ask too many questions after their camera was seized and photographs erased. As pressure against the independent media continues to slowly accumulate week by week in Venezuela, the GBRV has shown it is not hesitant to use intimidation, restrict the technical ability of radio networks to broadcast, or resort to simple bullying in order to intimidate and harass any media that dares to criticize. End Summary.

JUDGE HANDLING GLOBOVISION FIRED / HARASSMENT

¶2. (U) On July 16 a Venezuelan court issued an injunction preventing Globovision station owner Guillermo Zuloaga from leaving Venezuela after he was accused of "conspiracy to commit a crime" stemming from the May 21 seizure of 24 new vehicles on his property (Ref A). In a surprise move, however, on July 17 the judge handling the case, Alicia Torres, announced to the media that she was pressured into signing the court order preventing Zuloaga's departure. On July 20 Judge Torres was notified that her appointment as a judge had been revoked. In statements to the press, Torres claimed, "I am not political, I am independent. I am not from the opposition, nor do I know anybody. The person who pressured me was Venicce Blanco. This was an abuse of her power." Note: Blanco is the President of the Judicial Criminal Circuit Court. End Note. Following Torres' announcement that she had been dismissed, the injunction was overturned on July 21st by the 13th Criminal Court. The following day, however, in a third flip-flop, on July 22 the court changed its mind again and a new judge reinstated the original order preventing Zuloaga's departure.

¶3. (U) Harassment against opposition oriented TV station Globovision has continued throughout the month of July. Ten new summons were issued against journalists and employees of the station (for a total of 18 court ordered appearances) regarding a controversial October 13 transmission of the show "Hello Citizen," in which guest Rafael Poleo, editor of the opposition daily El Nuevo Pais, said that Chavez "would end up like Mussolini."

¶4. (C) With five investigations against the station currently pending in the offices of the government media regulatory agency CONATEL, Minister of Public Works and Housing, Diosdado Cabello, is likely to continue to use his position as head of the agency to further harass the network.

Globovision President Aberto Federico Ravell, in a private email shared with PolOff on July 16, opined that Cabello will shut the network down when he decides it is time. Ravell hypothesized "As the concession for Globovision was given to two persons, and one of them has died, we anticipate they will use legal mechanisms to recover 50% of the station, especially because they claim it (the concession) is not inheritable."

PRO-CHAVEZ STATIONS (AND SPORTS) IMMUNE FROM RESTRICTIONS

¶ 15. (C) In another move designed to cripple opposition oriented media, GBRV Minister Diosdado Cabello addressed the National Assembly (AN) on July 9 insisting that pro-Chavez lawmakers limit radio networks to a maximum of three stations under the proposed "Law on Social Responsibility for Radio and Television." Under Cabello's proposal, radio networks would further be atomized by limiting their ability to conduct simultaneous programs (joint broadcasts) to only 30 minutes a day. (Ref B) One presumed target of the measure is union radio an independent network of five stations and 15 affiliates.

¶ 16. (C) Pro-Government stations, however, seemingly are immune from the "new draft rules" designed to silence more critical stations. On July 20, Radio National de Venezuela (RNV) inaugurated a new state-sponsored radio station (92.5) in Monagas, Anzoategui. According to media reports, the pro-Chavez station will broadcast on a circuit of 73 stations, with an additional 35 stations to be brought into the circuit in the near future. Director of RNV, Helena Salcedo made a point of telling media attending the inauguration that, "in this area there was no access to stations or state run channels. People could only receive their information by cable, which is too costly for the majority of the population. We are insuring that people really can receive information, as established in the constitution."

¶ 17. (U) In a July 17 interview on state controlled VTV, Cabello announced his intention to immediately begin administrative proceedings against "illegal" radio stations. Cabello publicly threatened to seize 50% of Globovision, and made a point of defending his "administrative proceedings," claiming that 27 families currently control 32% of the radio spectrum. In an ironic and uniquely Venezuelan twist, however, Cabello specifically announced that all baseball and soccer games would be exempt from the new time restrictions of 30 minutes a day for joint broadcasting. According to Cabello, "Every rule has its exception."

NYTIMES REPORTER EXPERIENCES THUGGERY

¶ 18. (U) On July 9, New York Times photographer Scott Dalton was harassed, briefly detained, and had his electronic camera photos erased by security agents allegedly working for Barinas State Governor Adan Chavez. The photographer, accompanied by NY times journalist Simon Romero, was shooting photos at a public event where the Governor was speaking. The journalists were researching material for a July 20 NY Times article chronicling kidnappings, societal violence, and public insecurity in Barinas, a rural ranching state governed by President Chavez's eldest brother and birthplace of President Hugo Chavez.

¶ 19. (C) Following the incident, Romero told Embassy assistant information officer that Dalton had been harassed by "three men wearing red shirts." According to Romero the agents tried to push the photographer into a bathroom, and when he resisted, they seized his camera and erased several days worth of photographic material. Following the incident, the two journalists were escorted out of the event and Dalton's erased camera equipment was returned to him. The two men decided to keep the incident "low profile" in order to remain in the area and complete their assignment.

¶ 10. (C) Comment: Pressure against the independent media continues to slowly accumulate week by week in Venezuela. Pundits speculate as to exactly when Chavez will launch the final blow against the highly critical opposition oriented station. The GBRV has shown it is not hesitant to use intimidation, restrict the technical ability of radio networks to broadcast, or resort to simple bullying in order to intimidate and harass any media that dares to criticize. Chavez has established a pattern of threatening critical media, but then easing up as they self-censor. He

undoubtedly realizes he will pay a price in international credibility if he closes down Venezuela's last remaining critical TV station and would prefer to avoid that. Although Chavez may delay action to close down Globovision as he calculates the costs and benefits of this action, if the station refuses to change its editorial line history indicates that it will ultimately go off the air. End Comment.

CAULFIELD